

Tips for Advocates

Mental Health America would like to share with you some tools to help you move your community B4Stage4. To spread the message that we need to act B4Stage4, you can:

- Educate your community about mental health and raise awareness for prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery using MHA's materials
- Promote screening in your community using our online screening tool, available at www.mhascreening.org
- Learn about effective prevention, early intervention, and treatment interventions, some of which you can start to read about at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/effective-interventions or at www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost
- Encourage your community to fill out our survey when they are having trouble accessing a behavioral health service at <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/cant-find-care>
- Sign up for action alerts or volunteer with your local Mental Health America affiliate
- Share your story and highlight what works in behavioral health and what we need to better meet your community's needs

We have also provided a letter that you and other members of your community can use to encourage policy-makers to invest in services B4Stage4. You can send this letter to your state legislators, your city council, your state educational agency, your local board of education, or any other public or private groups you think might be interested in investing in a behavioral health prevention program.

After sending the letter, you can check back in a few weeks to see whether the policy-maker is interested in funding a program, which one, and what their plans are for going forward. This will encourage them to act and keep the process going. If they are not interested in funding a program, hopefully they can point you to someone else who will be.

We look forward to working with you in promoting prevention for all, early intervention for those at risk, treatment for those who need it, and recovery as the goal. With your help, this May is Mental Health Month we can inspire more people to think and act B4Stage4.

www.mentalhealthamerica.net/may



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Polycymaker Letter

Dear [Insert Name Here]:

May is Mental Health Month, and on behalf of children, parents, families, and friends, we hope that you will take this opportunity to invest in our community's behavioral health. Mental Health America started May is Mental Health Month over sixty years ago to build a national focus on crucial mental health issues. Although we have made incredible progress since May is Mental Health Month first began, we still have a long way to go and it is crucial to make this May count. This May in particular, Mental Health America is asking policy-makers to join our B4Stage4 campaign by foccusing on prevention and early intervention for their constituents.

Behavioral health is a pressing issue for our community. In [INSERT LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NAME HERE], children are sitting in their classrooms right now, learning how to count and spell. By the time they finish middle school and enter high school, most mental illness will have already developed and it will already be affecting their schoolwork, their friendships, and the course of their lives. If we act now, we can offer these children, and our community, the brightest possible future.

If we invest in even just one effective, evidence-based prevention program, this will make all the difference in the world for that class of children. With a program in place, the children will build more of the skills and resilience they need, and fewer children will struggle with depression, substance abuse, criminal justice involvement, and teen pregnancy as they grow up. The classroom of children will be more socially connected, more able to support one another, and more likely to thrive as they get older. They will also experience fewer hospitalizations, be less likely to be incarcerated, and use fewer public benefits, saving our community a lot of resources we can use elsewhere to get *even better* outcomes. When these children finally graduate from school and become part of our community, they will make our community stronger, healthier, and more prosperous.

There are many rigorously researched and evidence-based programs out there, and we need to figure out what's best for our community and get prevention in place. The Washington State Institute of Public Policy calculated out the costs and benefits of some of these programs for their state and that can serve as a guide (available at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost>). I personally like _____ (*Fill in an early intervention program you like. MHA likes programs like: youth and adult peer mentoring, Nurse-Family Partnerships, the PAX Good Behavior Game, and MST – Psychiatric*).

Our children can't wait, they only have one childhood and they're growing up right now. Invest in a prevention program and support our children and our community to grow, thrive, and prosper.

Sincerely,

[Your Name Here]

Learn more about the programs we like at:
<http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org>
<http://paxis.org/products/view/pax-good-behavior-game>
<http://mstservices.com/target-populations/psychiatric>